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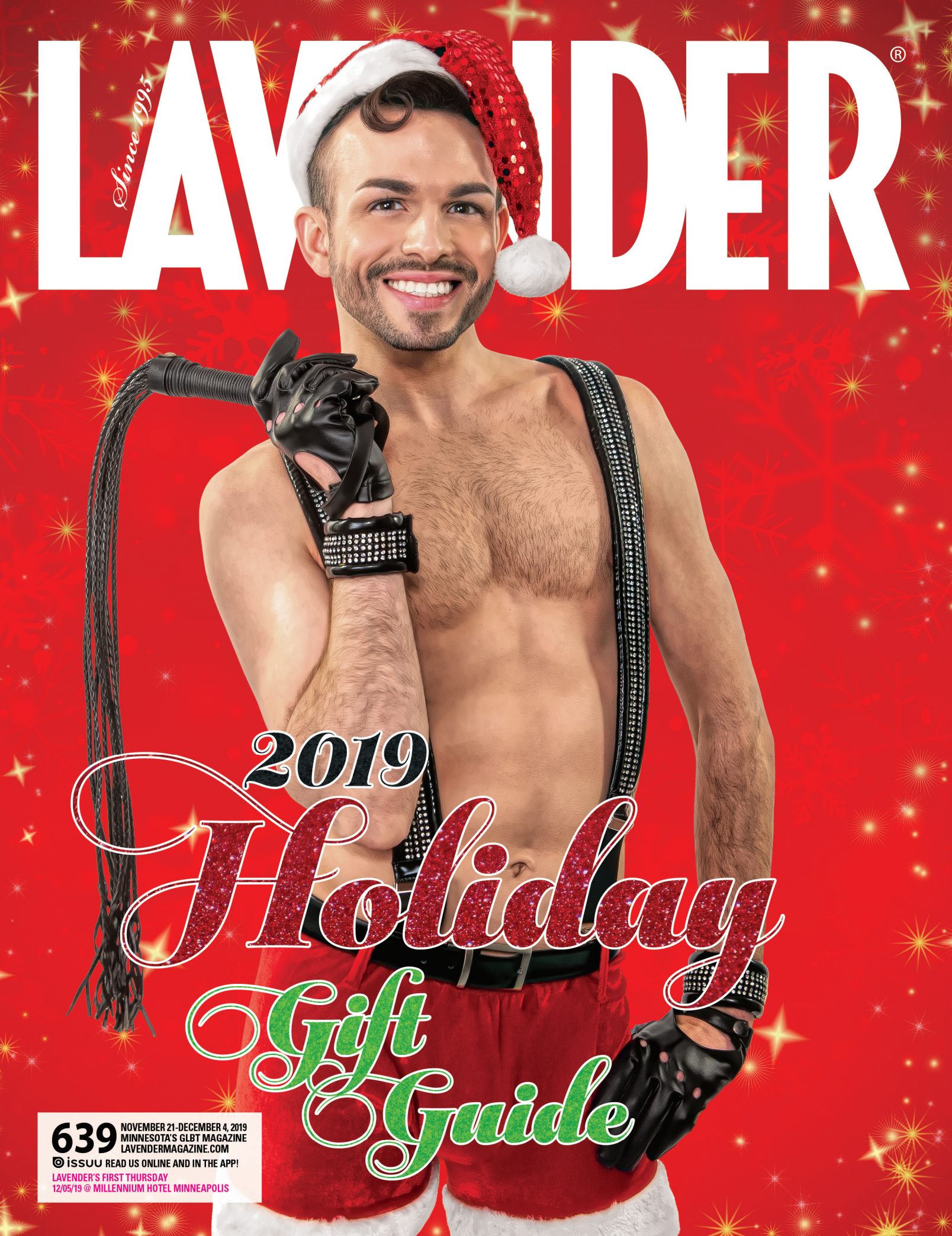

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CONTENTS

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ISSUE 639 NOVEMBER 21-DECEMBER 4, 2019

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Holiday Gift Guide

14 Holiday Entertainment
20 Food 'n Fun
24 Jewelry
28 Stocking Stuffers
32 Books
34 Pets
36 Sports
38 Fashion
40 Leather Life
42 Seniors
44 Our Rides

OUR LAVENDER
8 From the Editor
9 A Word in Edgewise
10 Lavender Lens

OUR SCENE
11 A Day In The Life

OUR VOICES
47 Skirting The Issues

OUR RESOURCES
48 Community Connection
49 The Network

ON THE COVER
Lavender's 2019 Holiday Gift Guide offers up an excellent selection of gifts for the holiday season.
Model: Nick Jansen
Photo by Mike Hnida

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FROM THE EDITOR | BY CHRIS TARBOX

Faithful Friends Who Are Dear To Us

The holiday season is upon us! As we prepare for the incoming snowy weather and the below-zero joys that come with it, it's also time to start the hunt for the perfect gifts for our friends and family as we await the holidays and the new year.

If you're struggling for great gift ideas, you're in luck! Welcome to *Lavender's* 2019 Holiday Gift Guide, where we offer up an overabundance of fantastic goodies in the realms of holiday entertainment, food, fashion, jewelry, cars, pets, and more!

On top of that, we also look at a Day In The Life of Tiffany Hedstrom, and our friend Ellen Krug observes upon the importance of the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

And while this time of year is high time for holiday cheer, it's also the perfect time to reflect on our loved ones themselves, especially those that we've lost this year.

Last month, *Lavender* and the Twin Cities as a whole lost our good friend John Townsend, whose impact on the local arts and GLBT communities was immeasurable. That impact was illustrated by the outpouring of memorials, remembrances, and fond stories from our readers and those whose lives John has touched, and on behalf of *Lavender*, I want to thank all of you for your beautiful words and messages. John was an incredible voice for our community, and while our arts coverage will continue in one form or another, there is simply no replacing John and his command of the written word, especially in relation to local theater.

So as you prepare for the yuletide season, remember to reach out to those you love and remind them how much they mean to you. Stay safe, keep warm, and always remember to take care of yourselves. From all of us here, have a wonderful holiday season! ∎

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A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

The Truth and Nothing But? But…

I like to think that most folks tell the truth. Most of the time.

Some folks lie all the time, but we'll table that discussion for later. *The Lie: A Memoir of Two Marriages, Catfishing, and Coming Out*, reviewed in this issue under "Books," is the memoir of a man who lied for decades, a lie he thought would help, but that brought him and his family acute unhappiness.

He lied for what he felt he had to, as others have. He was gay. He'd been raised in a culture and religion that dinned into his very core that gayness was an abomination, a sin that would lead him to hellfire and damnation. Yet he, like many others, craved love, family, children. And indeed, he did love his wife Katherine and his daughters, but…

So William "Bill" Dameron lied. Lied as a child, continued as a young man, as an adult. On social networks he presented a headshot and the descriptor, "forty-year-old straight white male." He wasn't hurting anyone; not his wife on whom he never cheated nor anyone else, so where was the harm? Nowhere, it would seem, until later, women from around the world began writing to him, questioning, accusing. His face had been hijacked, used under myriad names, heights, and lives, deceiving and devastating hopeful, longing women.

The eye-opening discovery of his catfishing by proxy prompted Dameron to confront his own lies, his deceptions, opening to the pain he had caused his family and himself. His closeted life, including a secret steroid addiction, robbed them all of the real Bill. He never cheated on Katherine, but his unexplained physical remoteness hurt her deeply.

The Lie is a sobering look at the closeted life of a gay parent. It is also an unflinching examination of what remedy—truth—is needed to restore the health of those deceived and disillusioned. Bill finds another gay, divorced dad, but it is Sisyphean work for Paul to convince the still self-loathing Bill of his love. Katherine and the now-grown daughters are not exempt from facing their own truths and forging their way through thickets of anger and pain to self-acceptance to embrace the real Bill.

Dameron quotes Wilde: "The Truth is rarely pure and never simple." ▮

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OCT. 13, 2019

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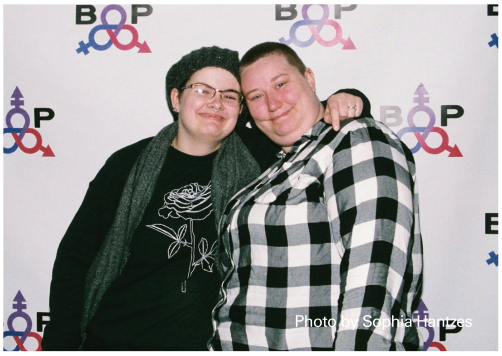
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A DAY in the Life

TIFFANY HEDSTROM

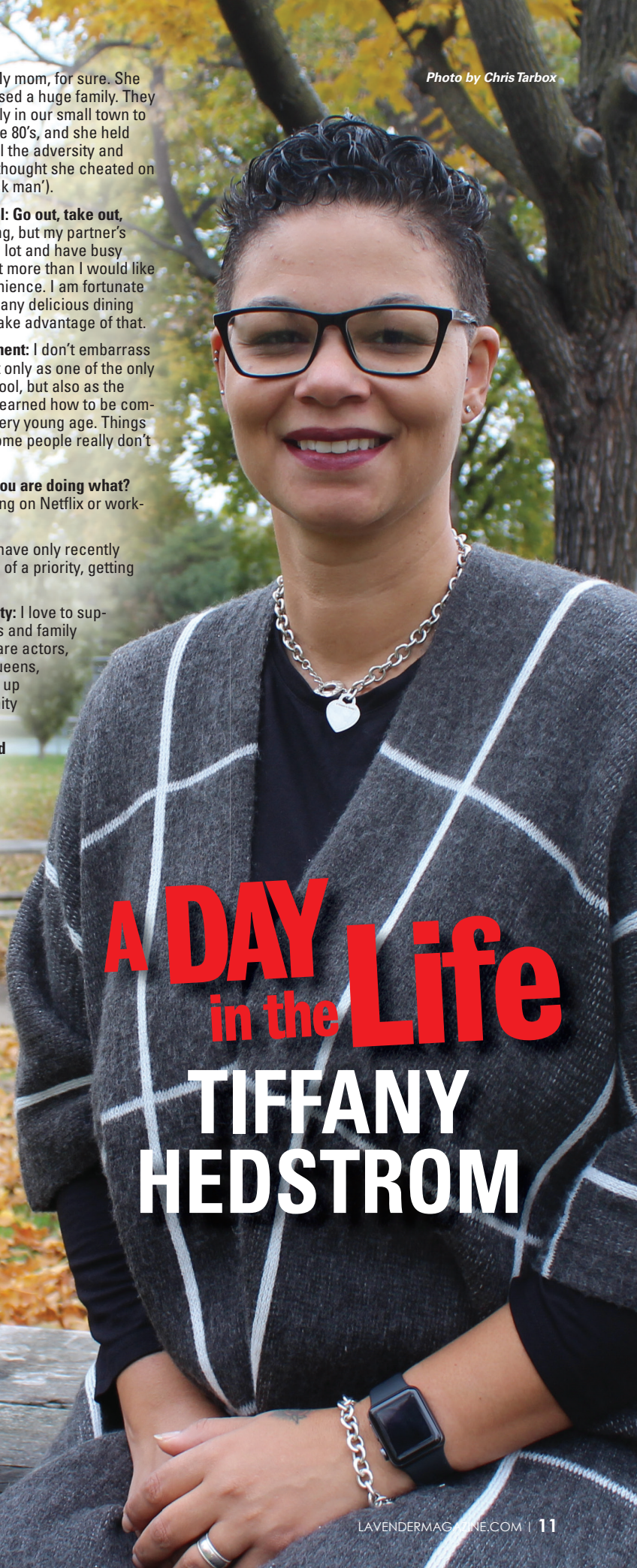


Photo by Chris Tarbox

Where did you grow up? Shakopee, MN

Where do you live? South Minneapolis

Who do you live with? My life partner and my two daughters.

What is your occupation? I am a Brand Ambassador all throughout the Twin Cities, and I also do billing for a chiropractic clinic. My partner and I recently started our own photo booth company, our website is PBReelness.com, we love helping people hype up their parties. Let us know you heard about us in Lavender and we will give you 25 percent off!

When did you come out? I don't think I was ever technically in the closet. I have always been attracted to both men and woman, but because I grew up in Catholic school, I thought I wanted to marry a man, have 2.5 kids and a house with a white picket fence. Once I had all those things, I realized just how miserable I was. I have been dating women exclusively since 2011. I met my partner in 2015 and am blessed to be in love with my best friend.

How'd that go? I guess telling my mom was the most awkward. I actually made my daughter do it and her response was along the lines of, 'Well, that explains why she hasn't been bringing any guys around here.' My children were a little surprised but also knew how unhappy I had been.

When do you wake up? As late as possible, I am not a morning person. I do have to get my youngest up for school around 6:45 a.m., but if I don't have to work that day, I will go back to bed.

Phone alarm or old school alarm? Phone alarm and sometimes Alexa.

What's the first thing you do in the morning? Drink some caffeine, sit in my amazing massage chair and re-watch the episode of the show I fell asleep to while checking my emails and FB.

Breakfast? Sometimes… A bowl of cereal and/or some fruit

Coffee? I wish I could, but my stomach says no thanks… I do sneak an iced coffee now and then.

Cream or no? I like fake creamer and real sugar.

How do you spend your commute: Jammin' to some tunes or talking on the phone, hands-free of course.

What do you nerd out for (Gaming, music, history, etc.)? I love stupid movies, like *Joe Dirt and Malibu's Most Wanted.*

What music have you been digging lately? I have been vibing to the lyrical stylings of Lizzo and Doja Cat mostly, but love a wide range of music. Lately I have been following Hollian, a local band, everyone should check them out.

Is your work space tidy or a hot mess? I'm somewhere between tidy and an organized mess.

What's been your favorite job? I was a coach for a Modeling and Acting school for almost ten years. I enjoyed teaching kids how to be confident and believe in themselves no matter what career they chose. It was rewarding to watch them grow as individuals and showcase their talents in a variety show we would put on for their friends and families at the end of our time together.

Who are your heroes? My mom, for sure. She was born in 1929 and raised a huge family. They were the first white family in our small town to adopt a mixed child in the 80's, and she held her head high through all the adversity and gossip (People actually thought she cheated on her husband with a 'black man').

Favorite weeknight meal: Go out, take out, or cook in? I hate cooking, but my partner's amazing at it. We work a lot and have busy schedules, so we eat out more than I would like to, but I enjoy the convenience. I am fortunate to live in a city with so many delicious dining options and I definitely take advantage of that.

Most embarrassing moment: I don't embarrass easily… growing up, not only as one of the only POC in my town and school, but also as the only POC in my family, I learned how to be comfortable in my skin at a very young age. Things that would embarrass some people really don't phase me.

On a usual weeknight, you are doing what? Binge watching something on Netflix or working.

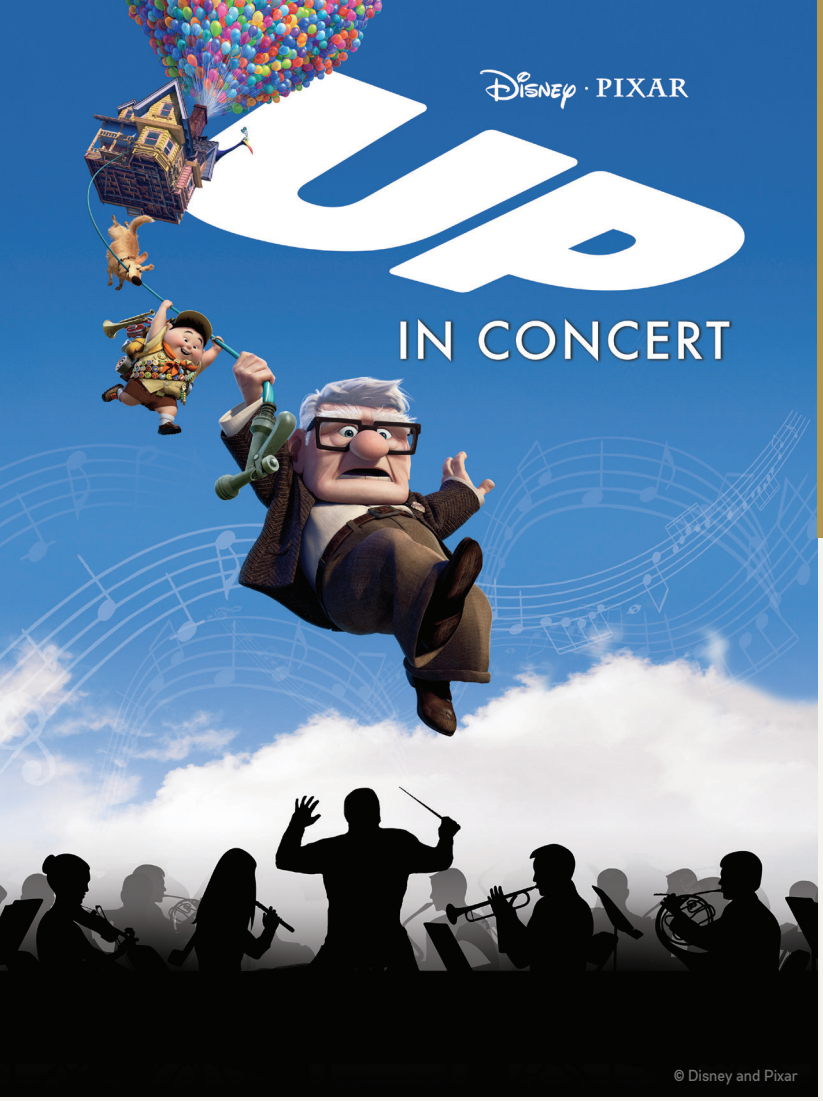
Bedtime: What's that? I have only recently been making sleep more of a priority, getting older is not fun…

Favorite weekend activity: I love to support whatever my friends and family are up to. Most of them are actors, musicians, drag kings/queens, etc. Any reason to dress up and support my community works for me!

What are you most proud of and why? I am very proud to live in such a diverse city. We really are a melting pot of so many cultures and lifestyles. There are so many opportunities in Minneapolis, there is something for everyone here, choose your adventure.

Words of wisdom to share: Be the person you can be proud to be. You shouldn't be ashamed of your actions, make good choices. You are in control of your life. Don't be a dick. Call your mother.

Lavender's Holiday Gift Guide 2019



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Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Holiday Entertainment

1. GETTING PLOWED: A HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE
Through Jan. 4, 2020
Brave New Workshop
824 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
612-332-6620
www.bravenewworkshop.com

For all of the joys and good tidings of the holiday season, this time of year can still be a little bit rough. Be it the cold weather, insane lines at the mall during Black Friday, or getting through a holiday dinner with visiting relatives, the always hilarious folks at Minneapolis' Brave New Workshop Theatre know the feeling, and they have just the survival guide for you! Join cast members Lauren Anderson, Denzel Belin, Taj Ruler, and Tom Reed in this Caleb McEwen-directed adventure through the madcap maladies of the winter holiday season, including the return of BNW's beloved "12 Days Of Christmas" musical routine.

1

2. A CHRISTMAS CAROL
Through Dec. 29
Guthrie Theater
818 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis
612-377-2224
guthrietheater.org

Bah, humbug! The Guthrie's Christmastime tradition returns for another year, regaling audiences with a stellar retelling of Charles Dickens' classic tale. The role of the miser of all misers, Ebenezer Scrooge, will be portrayed by Nathaniel Fuller, with Charity Jones playing the role for select dates in a continuation of her gender-bending performances of Scrooge that started at the Guthrie in 2017.

2

3. BLACK NATIVITY: LET US REJOICE TOGETHER
Nov. 21-Dec. 22
Penumbra Theatre
270 N. Kent St., St. Paul
651-224-3180
penumbratheatre.org

The beauty and grace of Penumbra Theatre's rendition of playwright legend Langston Hughes' timeless *Black Nativity* returns for the holiday season. A retelling of the biblical Nativity story using an entirely black cast with a number of classic Christmas carols sung gospel-style, director Lou Bellamy and musical director Sanford Moore helm a celebration of life, joy, and fellowship fronted by extremely talented lead vocalists, the Kingdom Life Church Choir, and features choreography by TU Dance's Uri Sands.

3

4. WHITE CHRISTMAS AT THE HEIGHTS THEATER
Nov. 29-Dec. 8
The Heights Theater
3951 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis
763-789-4992
www.heightstheater.com

Join the legendary Heights Theater in their annual tradition of bringing the 1954 Bing Crosby/Danny Kaye Christmas classic to the big screen! The beloved story of two WWII soldiers entertaining their fellow troops in a Christmas show in 1944 Europe will kick off with a live, 20-minute concert by jazz artist Maud Hixon and accompanying pianist Rick Carlson, preceded by a pre-show performance by Lou Hurvitz and Ed Copeland at the keys of the Heights Mighty Wurlitzer.

4

Continued on page 16

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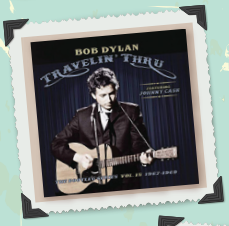

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Holiday Entertainment

5. A THREE TENORS CHRISTMAS
Nov. 30, Dec. 1, Dec. 3
Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
501 W. 78th St., Chanhassen
952-934-1525
chanhassendt.com

If you want to class up your holiday goings-on with some good ol' fashioned opera, then Chanhassen Dinner Theatres has the thing for you. Inspired by the legendary Three Tenors, vocal trio Nathan Bird, Aaron Humble, and David Walton return to the Fireside Theatre—alongside pianist Mark Bilyeu and a trio of instrumentalists—to wow your ears with incredible arrangements of Christmas classics, including "O Holy Night" and "Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming." On top of that, the trio will perform classic opera standards including the powerful "Nessun Dorma" and "Una furtiva lagrima."

Continued on page 18

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Nov. 30 - Dec. 3
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Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Holiday Entertainment

6. MISS RICHFIELD 1981: GENDER FLUIDS FOR THE HOLIDAYS
Dec. 6-22
Illusion Theater
528 Hennepin Ave. N., Minneapolis
612-339-4944
www.illusiontheater.org

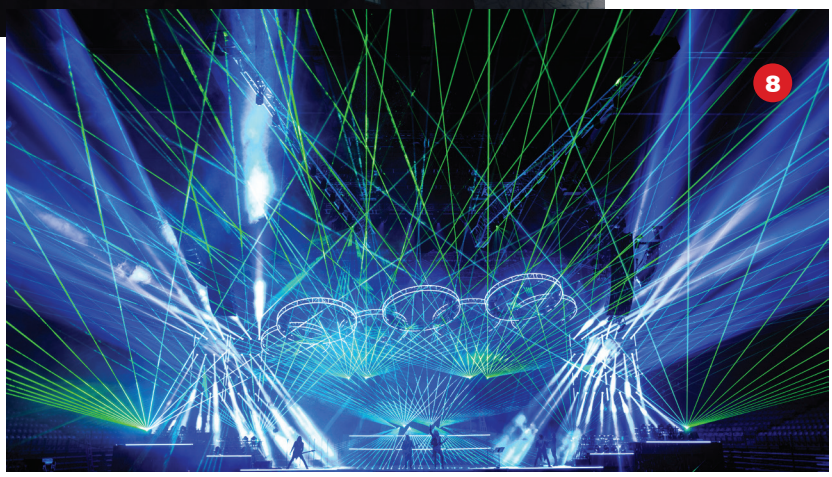
A national treasure as much as she is a Twin Cities institution, the incomparable Miss Richfield 1981 returns to the Illusion Theater for her latest holiday revue of irreverent and fabulous proportions! The ultimate beauty queen will attempt to find non-binary answers to our increasingly wild and complex society, complete with brand-new outfits, videos, and songs. Join her as she seeks to find an approach to happiness that will celebrate all genders across the spectrum!

7. CHRISTMAS WITH CANTUS
Dec. 12-22
Various Metro Area Locations
www.cantussings.org

Another holiday season, another reason to see the amazing all-male a cappella group Cantus, who will thrill audiences with their incredible vocal harmonies for a Yuletide event you'll never forget. This year, the ensemble will reimagine three beloved Christmas stories: The Little Matchstick Girl, Christmas or The Good Fairy, and The Nutcracker. From Westminster Hall in Minneapolis and Hamline United Methodist Church in St. Paul, to the Ordway Concert Hall and Stillwater's Trinity Lutheran Church, the metro area will have plenty of opportunities to see this unique brand of holiday storytelling in person.

8. TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA
Dec. 28
Xcel Energy Center
199 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul
651-726-8200
www.xcelenergycenter.com

What's a holiday season without a little bit of prog rock? One of the 21st century's top-selling live music acts returns to Minnesota for its "Christmas Eve and Other Stories" tour, based on their 1996 debut studio album. The music follows the story of a young angel sent to Earth to reignite the spark of goodness in humanity. Brace yourself for rock/metal renditions of "Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24", "Christmas Canon", "Promises To Keep", and much more.



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Holiday Gift Guide

by Kassidy Tarala

Food 'n Fun

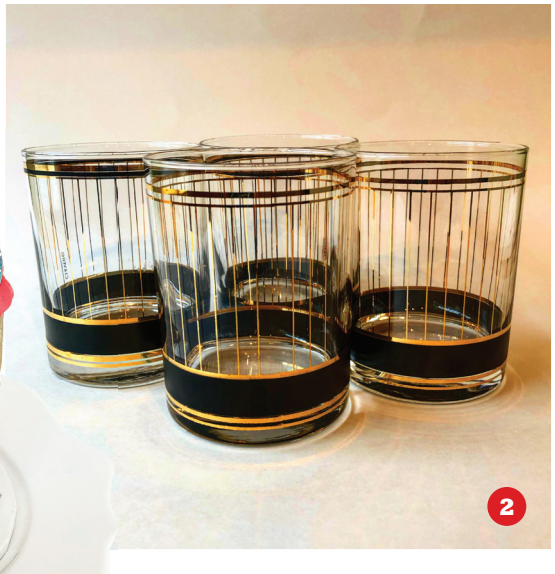
Everyone has a food-driven loved one in their life. Whether it's a parent, sibling, child, friend, or maybe it's yourself (come on, you deserve a gift, too!), food-centric gifts are often some of the best. Check out these gastronomic goodies that are perfect for every foodie in your life this holiday season, as well as some non-edible gift ideas that'll liven up any party.

1. SWEETHEART CAKE
You can never go wrong when giving the gift of deliciousness! Know anyone with a sweet tooth? Nothing says "Happy Holidays" to a dessert lover more than a Sweetheart Cake from Amy's Cupcake Shoppe. Available in a variety of flavors and customizable decorations, these 4 round cakes are a perfect way to send both a personalized message and a sweet treat.
Starts at $36
Amy's Cupcake Shoppe
amyscupcakeshoppe.com

2. SET OF 4 DOUBLE OLD-FASHIONED GLASSES
We all have a favorite cocktail to get us in the holiday spirit. Give someone special in your life the gift of a classy, durable set of Old-Fashioned glasses. Perfect for holiday parties and other gatherings, these classic, mid-century modern glasses come in a set of four and feature 24k gold trim. Available in gold and black.
$50 per set
MidModMen+friends
midmodmen.com

3. VIKING GLASS COVERED DISHES
Also from MidModMen+friends are these vibrantly colored dishes that double as artwork. Available in bluenique, persimmon, and amber, these dishes were made in the 1960s with Viking glass. Use them as serving bowls or simply show them off as beautiful decor. Either way, they won't disappoint.
$75 each
MidModMen+friends
midmodmen.com

1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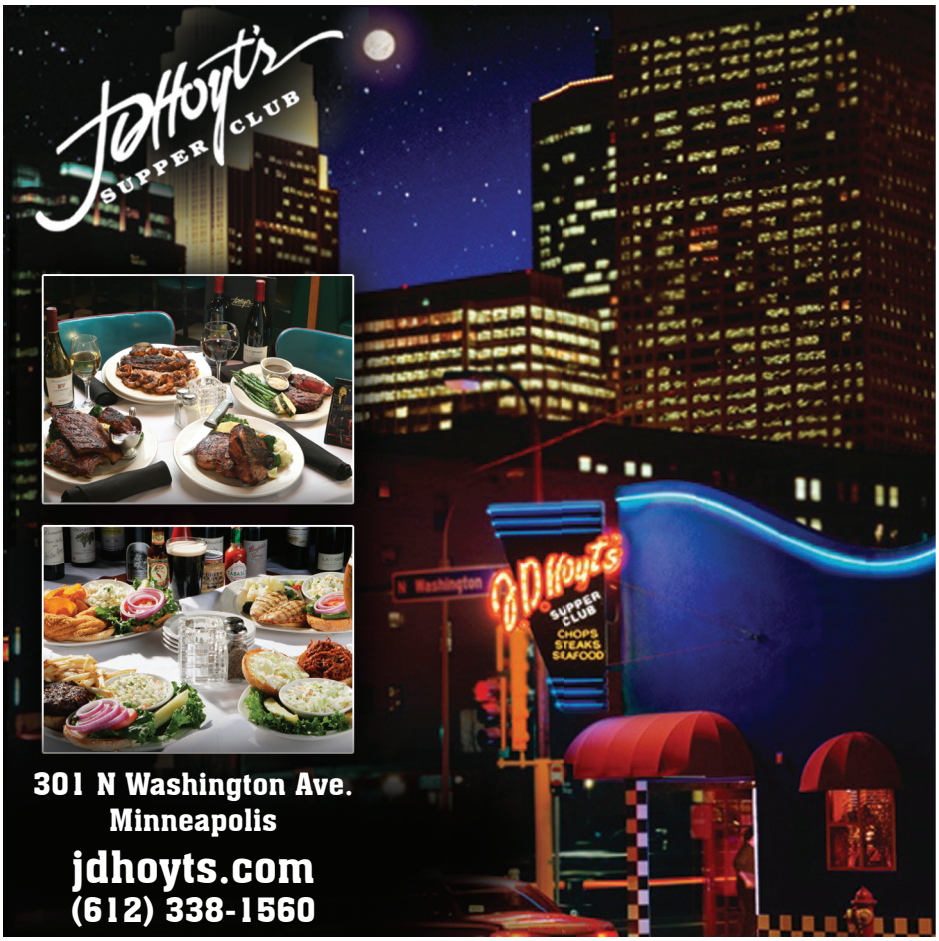
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Holiday Gift Guide

by Kassidy Tarala

Food 'n Fun

4. HOLIDAY POTICA
If you want to give someone the taste of home baked goodies without actually going through the laborious process, Holiday Potica (po-TEE-tsa) is the gift for you. This European sweet bread is hand-rolled, made of paper-thin dough, and layered with a filling of pecan, poppy seed almond, walnut, walnut apple, or walnut raisin.
$18.99 each/ 3+ $16.99 each
Sunrise Bakery
store.sunrisebakery.com

5. ILLUMINIDOL BETTY WHITE CANDLE
Know a die-hard Betty White fan? Okay, so we all do. Well, get them this Illuminidol Betty White prayer candle so they can finally show their love and devotion to this Golden Girls star through a religious medium. Other popular celebrities and athletes are available (though I don't know who you'd rather pray to than Betty White).
$14.99
Bachman's
bachmans.com

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Kassidy Tarala

Jewelry

A sparkly gift is a great gift indeed. If you're looking for a little bling to give a loved one this holiday season, look no further than these shiny goodies. Because if they're worth more than gold, their gift should be, too.

1. IRTHLY RETURN SANS NECKLACE
Made of 14K gold recycled metal and multiple conflict-free diamonds, this Irthly Return Sans Necklace is both a stylish and guilt-free gift. The 30 chain makes it a glamorous addition to complete your outfit for a night on the town.
$2,900
New Gild Jewelers
newgild.com

2. MOON AND STARS MOONSTONE RING
We all know someone who introduces themselves to strangers as their zodiac sign. For the perfect gift for your star lover, get one of New Gild's celestial rings featuring a moonstone set in sterling silver with four accent diamonds.
$650
New Gild Jewelers
newgild.com

3. DINOSAUR BONE AND LAVA BEAD BRACELETS
Whether you know someone who is beyond dinosaur-obsessed or someone who never shies away from a statement piece, these dinosaur bone and lava bead bracelets will make the perfect gift. The unisex bracelets feature five genuine dinosaur bone beads, meaning no two are exactly the same.
$99 each, $179 for two
Jewelry by Johan
jewelrybyjohan.com

Continued on page 26

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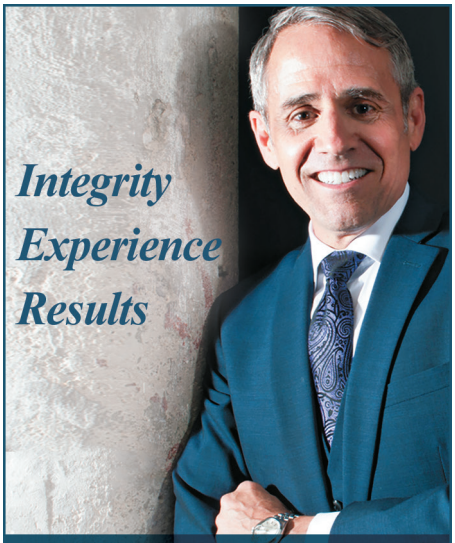

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Kassidy Tarala

Jewelry

4

5

4. 3.00 CARAT LAB GROWN DIAMOND TENNIS BRACELET
Just as glamorous as real diamonds—and much more ethical—these tennis bracelets are made of lab grown diamonds that are more than 3 carats total weight. The round cut diamonds add a little sparkle while still keeping it simple.
$2,310
Arthur's Jewelers
arthursjewelers.com

5. LAB GROWN DIAMOND THREE STONE PENDANT
Made of round cut, lab grown diamonds, this necklace is the perfect gift for someone with simple but elegant style. Featuring .27 carats total weight, this delicate necklace will hang perfectly from your special someone's neck for years to come.
$300
Arthur's Jewelers
arthursjewelers.com

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by Mike Marcotte

Stellar Stocking Stuffers

Quality doesn't have to cost hundreds of dollars. Here is a roundup of companies, including three based in Minnesota, who are making products anyone would love to receive this holiday season. And keep reading for some exclusive deals!

1

1. WOOL LINER & DEERSKIN CHOPPERS
$88
Steller Handcrafted Goods
www.stellergoods.com
Minneapolis-based Steller Handcrafted Goods got its start eight years ago after owner Julie Steller purchased a pair of repurposed wool sweater mittens. She was determined to make another pair. Today, Steller's team consists of 13 women who create mittens, hats, purses, coats and more using repurposed wool sweaters and leather clothing along with Nordic braid and vintage buttons. These Wool Liner and Deerskin Choppers will help any Minnesotan get through a bitter winter. The outside layer is deerskin sourced from Minnesota and the inner layer is a high-quality repurposed wool sweater with polar fleece lining. The cuffs come up to your wrist, meaning that snow and ice won't find their way in when you're brushing snow off your car.
Exclusive deal: use promo code DEC2019 to get 10 percent off orders over $50 through Dec. 31, 2019.

2

2. BEST SELLERS BASKET
$35
Redhead Creamery
www.redheadcreamery.com
Redhead Creamery has been making cheese for just over five years on cheesemaker's Alise Sjostrom's parent dairy farm. She dreamed to be a part of her family's business ever since she was 17 years old. They offer tours of the farm, located in Brooten, Minnesota, on Fridays and Saturdays. Their Best Sellers Basket is sure to please. It includes Redhead's Lucky Linda Clothbound Cheddar (named after Alise's mom), Little Lucy Brie (named after Alise's daughter), and a bag of Ridiculously Good Cheddar Cheese Curds.
This holiday season, give someone whiskey-flavored cheese! Redhead Creamery teams up with Panther Distillery, in nearby Osakis, to make the North Fork Whiskey Washed Munster, a limited-production cheese which uses Panther's Minnesota 14 whiskey.
While you're on their online store, I would definitely throw a jar of the Velvet Bees Honey Butter in your order. You can eat it with a spoon.

Continued on page 30

mint

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Geoff Sudit DDS, MS

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Mike Marcotte

Stellar Stocking Stuffers

3

4

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Open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays

MINNESOTA MAKERS, ROBBINSDALE
Open Tuesdays through Saturdays

WEATHERED REVIVALS, ST. JOSEPH
Open Thursdays through Sundays

3. MAGNETIC WOOD BOW TIE BOX SET
$89-99
SwitchWood
www.switchwood.com/wood-bow-tie-box-sets
I was introduced to Virginia-based SwitchWood a few years ago and immediately became obsessed with their bow ties. They are clip on, but what really blows everyone's minds is that the wood pieces are magnetic, meaning you can switch out the grains with the fabric pieces to create different looks. It makes for a great conversation piece. These aren't your ordinary bow ties.
I would recommend starting with a wood bow tie box set, which will get you one bow tie with two sets of grain, meaning you'll have two different bow ties. In addition to bow ties, they make sunglasses, cuff links and more, all made of wood.
Exclusive deal: use promo code SWITCH to get 20 percent off everything on SwitchWood's website through Dec. 20, 2019.

4. I HAVE A BIG HEART ON CARD
$5
Bruno Press
www.mcbrunopress.com/cards/big-heart-on
Mary Bruno inherited her letterpress print shop from her father, who was an art professor at St. Cloud State University. He acquired old letterpress equipment in the late 80's and early 90's, which Mary is now putting to good use.
A self-proclaimed "professional cusser", Bruno was placing swear words, along with edgy, irreverent sentiment, on cards before it was a thing. She's been at it for nearly ten years. Cards are the mainstay of Bruno Press, and there is a GLBT selection is available. They're sold online and in the Twin Cities at Mitrebox Framing Studio, the Electric Fetus and the Minnesota Center for Book Arts.
In addition to cards, Bruno Press makes to-do lists, note cards, calendars, and coasters.
Exclusive deal: use promo code LAVENDER to get free shipping on all orders through Dec. 20, 2019

Mike Marcotte is the Senior Producer for KSTP-TV's Twin Cities Live. You can read his Minnesota and LGBT-focused travel guides on his website, www.givemethemike.com.

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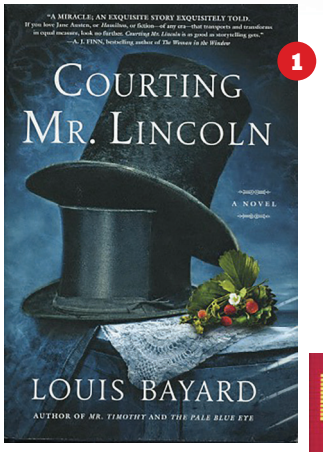
Holiday Gift Guide

by E.B. Boatner

Books



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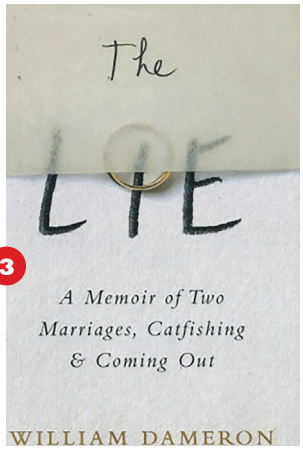
1. COURTING MR. LINCOLN
Louis Bayard
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
$27.95
A tour-de-force love triangle… of a sort. Bayard, author of Mr. Timothy, The Black Tower, and other tales of the real and the fictional, here tackles the web of affection, love, loyalty, loneliness, and jealousy that tightened about the 21-year-old Mary Todd, the handsome Joshua Speed, and gangling, awkward country lawyer, Abraham Lincoln. It's 1840. Mary Todd, advancing in age by the standard of the day, has come from Alton to Springfield to live with her sister while she (discreetly) seeks a husband. Mary is intelligent, witty, with a keen interest in politics. Her story opens this novel, and alternates with Speed's. Lincoln emerges from the mix. Bayard handles the ongoing, intimate relationship between Speed and Lincoln with finesse, using letters and historical documents as the frame upon which he weaves powerful and believable fictional dialogue. A mesmerizing read.

2

2. CHRONIN VOLUME II: THE SWORD IN YOUR HAND
Allison Wilgus, author and illustrator
Tor
$17.99
The Sword in Your Hand is the concluding volume of Wilgus's historical time-travel adventure, Chronin, preceded by The Knife at Your Back. Undergraduate Mirai Yoshida has left 2045 via her university Time Studies Program and is now stranded in 1864 Edo (Tokyo). She's surviving by presenting as a male ronin, hired by a tea shop owner. Her ex, now the owner's boyfriend, intentionally stranded himself to be part of the rebellion against the Tokugawa shogunate. History has become tangled through the interference of other time travelers with various agendas. Without the Meji Restoration to provide a constitutional monarch, Mirai can never return. Can she foment a successful peasant uprising to bring Japan back on course? Must she choose between saving the future or her life?

3. THE LIE: A MEMOIR OF TWO MARRIAGES, CATFISHING & COMING OUT
Willliam Dameron
Little A
$24.95
Dameron's catalyst was discovering his hijacked selfie with "forty-year-old straight white male" description that had been used to hoodwink countless women worldwide. But the story started with his first lie, one much closer to home. Dameron was not straight, he was gay. He had spent over forty years denying the truth to his wife, his children, himself. In his southern Catholic upbringing, gayness led to perdition, so Mother strove relentlessly to "straighten" him. Young Dameron married Katherine, herself riddled with self-doubt, who bore two daughters. Twenty years later, Dameron revealed his gayness. Devastation. Divorce. His memoir is an atonement, an unsparing quest to acknowledge harm one has done, to forgive others' harm. Dameron demonstrates that you, your family—your Southern mother—can evolve and find love.



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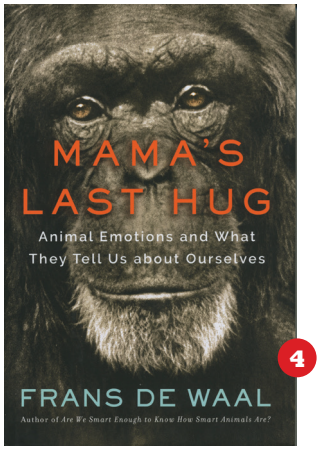
4. MAMA'S LAST HUG: ANIMAL EMOTIONS AND WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES
Frans de Waal
Norton
$27.95
Mama lay on her deathbed, but became animated when a friend from the past came to say farewell. She grinned, touched his face and hair, reached to pull him closer. Mama was an elderly chimpanzee, her visitor, Dutch biologist Jan van Hooff. Author de Waal's 2016 book, Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?, is one of several investigating animal emotion, and Mama delves even more deeply into the subject. Animal emotions have frequently been ignored or belittled, but here de Waal directly compares animal and human feelings; broadly across species and deeply into evolutionary time. It's not just blue-sky projection: emotional changes can be measured through changes in hormones shared through nearly all species, "from humans to birds to invertebrates." Engrossing.



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Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Pets

As we get closer to the holidays, don't leave your furry friends out of your gift shopping adventures! Here are some great ideas for the pets in your life.

1. MACI'S MUNCHIES
Can't decide what kind of fancy treats to get your dog? Go for the package deal, courtesy of Maci Moo Treats! This gift box includes Cheese Its, Pumpkin Ginger, Cinnaswirls, and Bacon and Egg-flavored dog treats, offering Fido the perfect snacks for the holiday season.
$15
Maci Moo Treats
www.macimootreats.com

2. SNOUT SOOTHER
We humans aren't the only ones whose noses get all chapped during the bitter cold of winter. This moisturizing balm will help your dog's nose from getting dry and cracked, a blend of vegan and organic moisturizing ingredients that'll keep your pupper comfortable.
$13.95-26.95
Natural Dog Company
naturaldogcompany.com

3. BOILED WOOL BALLS
If you're looking to snag some dog toys made for a good cause, look no further! These 100 percent, fair trade wool ball toys made by Ware of the Dog are handmade through felting, and these products also provide employment to craftswomen in Nepal. Each ball is available in two sizes: 2.25 inches and 3.25 inches.
$8-10
Ware of the Dog
wareofthedog.com

4. DOG BEER IPA PLUSH TOY
Now obviously, you can't include your dog in the fun when you're kicking back with an actual beer, but you can give them the next best thing with this adorable "yappy hour" plush beer from Fringe Studio's Toy Box Collection. This squeaky toy facsimile of an IPA bottle is perfect for the pup who wants to party hard after a long day at the office.
$11.99
Bachman's
www.bachmans.com

5. RAKU EXTRA SMALL ODYSSEY PET URNS
In the tragic event of losing a pet, it's incumbent on us to honor them after they pass. One World Memorials offers these beautiful, handmade metal raku pet urns featuring two bronze paw prints on the lid. This handsomely crafted urn is a lovely tribute for your beloved pet.
$49.95
One World Memorials
oneworldmemorials.com

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Meet Carter Averbeck, the brains behind the interior design company Omforme; a man who says he's "continually seeking the fantastic in the mundane," while never shying away from bold color and daring design, because "What is life if you can't inspire others by stepping out of the safety zone?" He's a furniture guru, an artist extrordinaire and an organic jellybean addict.
Is it any wonder he chooses our eyewear?
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Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Sports

Everybody has at least one friend or family member who either loves sports or enjoys the great outdoors. Scope out some of these great gift ideas for the athletically inclined in your life!

1. TROLLHAUGEN GIFT CARD
50 minutes north of the Twin Cities metro is a magical place where all your snowboarding, skiing, and tubing dreams can come true! Gift the shredder in your life with an opportunity to take lessons, rent out equipment, and have the time of their lives at Trollhaugen in beautiful Dresser, WI.
Prices vary
Trollhaugen
trollhaugen.com

2. MINNESOTA UNITED FC KNIT HAT WITH POM
Show your support for The Loons with this beautiful light blue knit hat officially licensed by Minnesota United FC! This one-size-fits-most fashion statement will be a great way to keep warm and support your home team in the off-season.
$31.99
Minnesota United FC
www.mlsstore.com

3. MINNESOTA LYNX GLOBAL LOGO ZIP-UP HOODIE
Throw this comfy hoodie on, and you'll feel like a champion yourself! Show off your pride for our four-time WNBA champions with this excellent addition to your winter wardrobe.
$59.99
Minnesota Lynx
lynxteamstore.com

4. MINNESOTA STATE PARKS GIFT CARD
Do you like camping? Canoeing? Hiking? Snowshoeing? Paddleboarding? Or just standing outdoors and taking in all the beauty that nature can muster? Consider fetching a gift card from Minnesota State Parks, which can be used for countless activities and events year-round.
Prices vary
Minnesota State Parks
www.dnr.state.mn.us

5. MINNESOTA TWINS LONG-SLEEVE T-SHIRT
Play ball! Get your Twins fan the perfect t-shirt as they wait patiently for next season with a sleek navy blue long-sleeve made from 100 percent cotton.
$29.99
Minnesota Twins
www.mlbshop.com

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Fashion

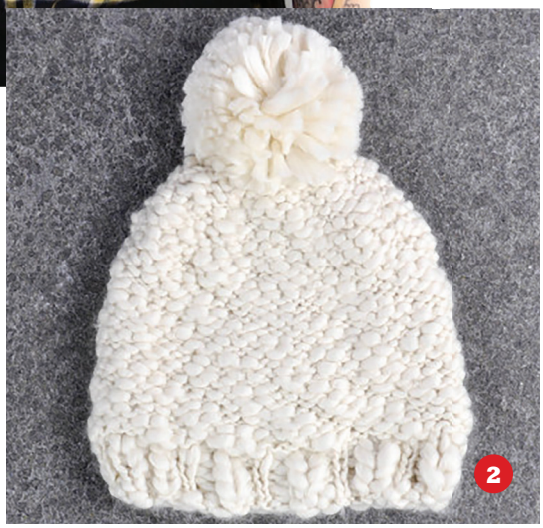
Sometimes, the perfect gift comes in the form of a comfortable, oversized sweater. Other times, it's a pair of cozy, plush socks. Regardless, give the gift of comfort and style this holiday season with one of these fashionable pieces.

1. PUNK IT UP RAGLAN
With raglan sleeves, a quarter zip neckline, an optional clear or plaid vinyl color, and a boxy fit, this flannel can be gifted to any fashion fiend on your list.
$250
Mx Apparel
mxappareldesign.com

2. CHUNKY KNIT HAT
Obviously, Bachman's flowers are never a disappointing gift, but why stop there? Give someone a cozy chunky knit hat this holiday season. Not only will they appreciate its warmth, but they'll love how easy it is to match the stylish ivory hat with any of their winter apparel.
$16.99
Bachman's
bachmans.com

3. FIRESIDE CREW PLUSH SLIPPER SOCKS
All of our holiday wish lists look vastly different, but there's one thing that pretty much remains a necessity across the board: fuzzy socks. These cozy plush slipper socks are basically heaven for your feet, not to mention, their pink and zebra print design makes them as fashionable as they are comfortable.
$12.49
Bachman's
bachmans.com

Photo by by Ella Sophia Photography, modeled by Lani Jane



4. KATIN SIERRA FLANNEL
This twill weave stripe flannel is the perfect gift for that person in your life who is somehow always cold. Brushed with an extra soft moleskin finish, this flannel is 100 percent flannel and 100 percent comfortable. Keep in mind, Scout Style is temporarily located at 791 Grand Ave., St. Paul, which is where it will be through the holidays. Though they currently aren't selling any products online, you can visit the company's Instagram account for more information.
$80
Scout Style
Instagram: @scout_style

5. YODI HOODED SWEATSHIRT
Designed by Christopher Straub, this Yodi hooded sweatshirt is one of his best-selling illustrations. Available in youth and adult sizes and various different colors, these hoodies make the perfect gift for those with unique style.
$22-30
Christopher Straub
christopherstraub.com

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Holiday Gift Guide

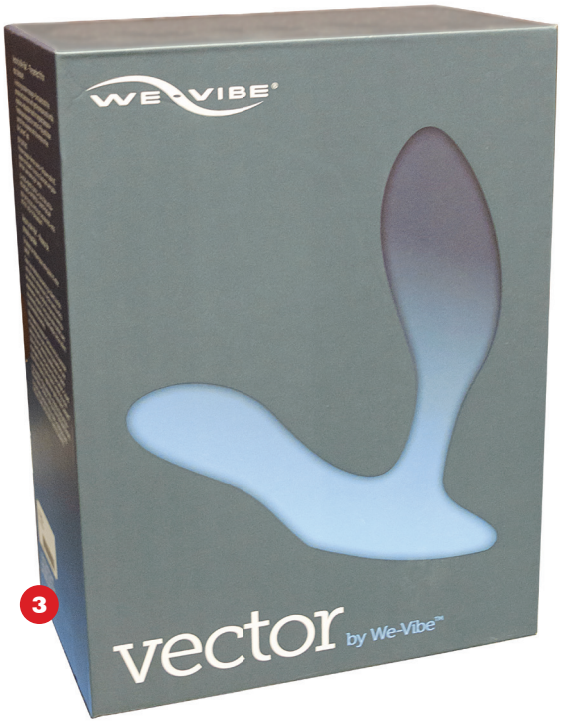
by Steve Lenius

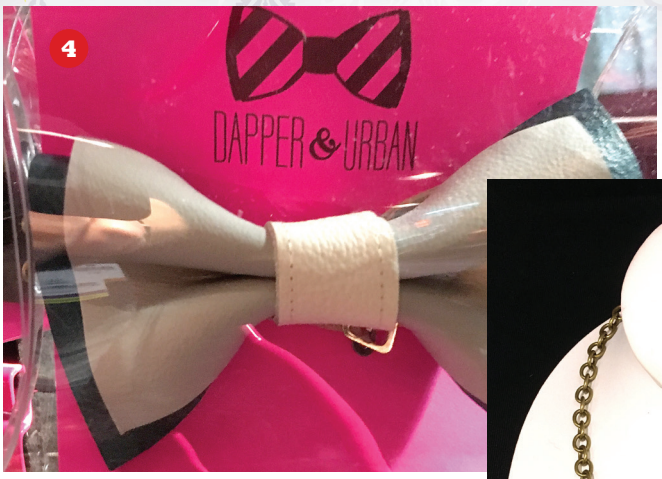
Leather Life

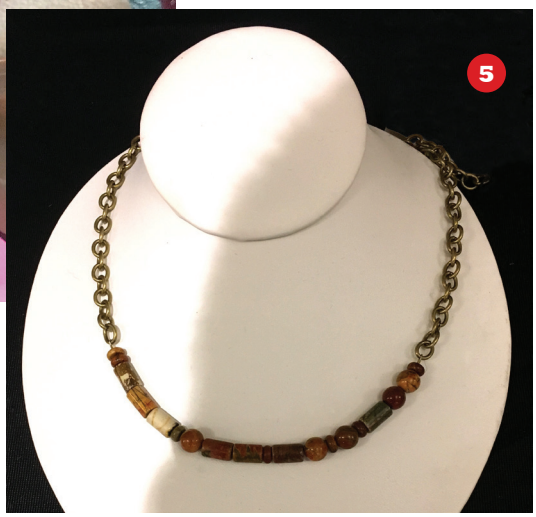
1. BLACK LEATHER COASTER SET
$10 for the set
Set of six black leather coasters with white stitching, and a handy black leather case to hold them. By Bay-Berk Leather. Available at Rainbow Road (rainbowrd.com).

2. BLACKLIGHT CANDLES AND ROPECANDLES
$11 each, rope $6.99 for 15 ft.
Take wax play or rope play to another dimension with candles and rope that glow under blacklights. Available at Smitten Kitten (smittenkittenonline.com).

3. VECTOR BY WE-VIBE
$139.99
Ten vibration modes that you or a partner can control anywhere from a phone using the We-Connect app. Body-safe silicone, USB rechargeable. Available at Bondesque (bondesque.com).







4. LEATHER BOW TIE
$40
Handmade genuine leather pre-tied bow tie with adjustable neck strap. Other designs available. By Dapper & Urban (www.dapperandurban.com).

5. MORSE CODE JEWELRY
$32
A necklace that uses Morse code to spell out your desired message (this one says "owned"). By Mischievous Creations (mischievouscreations.com).

Holiday Gift Guide

by Chris Tarbox

Seniors

If you're searching for that perfect gift for the senior folks in your life, look no further! Here are a few great presents that'll light up their holiday season.

1. CARDINAL COTTAGE PUZZLE
Let's be honest, when the snow arrives in Minnesota, it really, really makes itself at home. For those winter nights where staying indoors is the best option, you can pass the time with this beautifully illustrated 1,000 piece jigsaw puzzle featuring a picturesque holiday cottage.
$19.99
Bachman's
bachmans.com

2. WOODCHUCK SPIRAL JOURNAL
Whether it's jotting down your thoughts for a daily diary, or practicing your sketching skills, this gorgeous wooden spiral-bound journal is an excellent gift for your loved ones. Plus, for every journal sold, Woodchuck will plant a tree, and who doesn't love a little environmentalism in their gift shopping?
$34.99
Bachman's
bachmans.com

3. MACARON GIFT PACK
This 6- or 12-pack of gluten-free macarons made in-store at Amy's Cupcake Shoppe are a perfect stocking stuffer for those with a sweet tooth in your life. Choose from a variety of macarons, or you can customize the colors and flavors with a minimum of twelve.
$12-24
Amy's Cupcake Shoppe
www.amyscupcakeshoppe.com

4. GROUNDS & HOUNDS COFFEE
If the seniors in your life love coffee and dogs, consider snagging some fair trade, organic specialty coffee from Grounds & Hounds, whose sales support rescue initiatives and groups offering second chances to canines. Twenty percent of Grounds & Hounds' proceeds are donated to rescue organizations to make this beautiful cause a reality.
Various prices
Grounds & Hounds
groundsandhoundscoffee.com

1

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4

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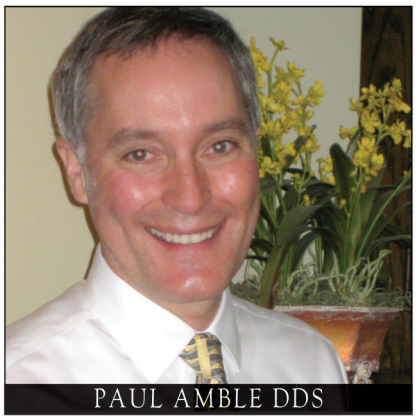

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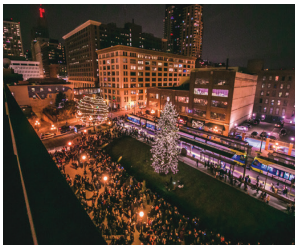

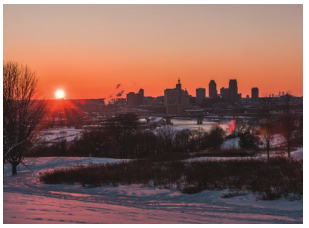

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Randy Stern

Our Rides

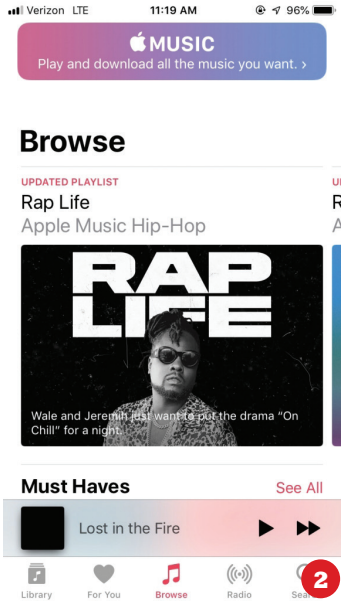
Going on a road trip? We have some great items for you for the Holiday Season! How about these suggestions?

1. CELL PHONE MOUNT
In Minnesota, there is now a law that forbids you from holding a cell phone while driving. Hands-free is now the law—not just in Minnesota, but across the country. If your vehicle does not have a smartphone link or a Bluetooth connection, you can still have your phone attached to a mount on your vehicle. You can still take calls and get directions from your navigation app while the phone is mounted in your car. It is perhaps the handiest item one can have when on the road.
Priced from $8.95 and up. Assorted items available through Amazon.com

2. MUSIC STREAMING SERVICES
We can't live without music while we drive, right? Why not subscribe to a music streaming service and get the latest tunes fed through your vehicle? As long as you have a connection through your phone into the audio system, you're halfway there. The rest is up to you. And there are several services that are available for free, or to be upgraded for either a monthly or annual fee. Paid subscriptions give listeners more perks, such as commercial-free programming, a wider variety of music, and playback options. Family plans are great for multiple listeners to enjoy everyone's playlists.
Priced from Free to $14.99/month—depending on service. Available either through Apple Music (www.apple.com/shop/gift-cards), Google Play Music (play.google.com/intl/en_us/about/giftcards), Pandora, Spotify, and other services.

3. PET TRAVEL PRODUCTS
Traveling with your pet? There are plenty of items available to make them comfortable while you're on the road. These products range from seat harnesses and protectors, portable water and food receptacles, dog carriers and backpacks, even booster seats. We love our pets and we want them to feel safe and happy while on a road trip. Not to mention, these items fit most vehicles—even the front passenger seat of a sports car!
Various prices—depending on the item chosen. Visit www.kurgo.com/dog-travel-—or see your local pet store for similar products.

4. PREPAID FUEL CARDS
Fumbling through your credit and debits cards can be a pain at the pump. No fear, because practically every brand of gasoline offers a gift card or a prepaid fuel card to make things easier. Before you get one, consider how much fuel you will need for your trip—or a year's full of trips. Then, load them up on a card. By using one of these cards, it will help make your trip to the pump a quick experience! Just find the right gas stations that on your way!
Various prices, depending on how much value you load on each card. Available through Speedway, Holiday Stationstores, BP, Shell, KwikTrip, and other fuel retailers.



Continued on page 46

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Randy Stern

Our Rides

5. WINTER TIRES
It's the holiday season and you have to go see your family, your friends or fulfill your long distance relationship. If you live in Minnesota and the Upper Midwest, there is a chance that the roads will be slick with snow, ice, sleet, slush, and so forth. We always said that the best way to make your winter drive safe is to get a set of winter tires. Over the years, we featured vehicles that wore a set of winter shoes, and we can speak on the benefits of why you should have a set of them on your vehicle. If you know of someone who needs a set of winter tires, be a good friend or family member of gift a set! They'll be safe for the holidays! **Various prices, depending on brand, type, and size. See your local tire retailer or TireRack.com.**

6. HOTEL STAY
Sometimes, we think we can visit our friends and family only to find there is "no room at the inn." There is always room at a nearby hotel. But, did you know that you can give the gift of a hotel stay for your weary traveler? For example, Marriott and Hilton have gift cards available for stays that cover all of their properties—from affordable accommodations to luxury hotels. Think about it: would you rather have an out-of-town guest turn out to be a bad house guest? Or, would you rather have a relaxed visitor to enjoy the holidays with? Besides, you can enjoy their indoor pool or whirlpool… **Various prices – you can order gifts cards by set value. Gift cards available through Marriott.com, Hilton.com, and other major hotel chains (NOTE: Gift card holders must present a credit or debit card at check-in and can use the gift card at check out).**

SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

MATTERING

I called a small Idaho jail on a September Monday afternoon while sitting in a rental car parked in front of a worn-out convenience store in western Massachusetts; the rental was my temporary office since I was set to speak at a nearby university over the next two days.

I heard a couple rings before a woman's voice answered on the other end.

"Hi," I said brightly. "My name is Ellie Krug and I'm calling to speak to Blair; John Balding, her probation officer, told me that you folks would arrange for me to talk to Blair."

"That's right," the female voice responded. "Can I put you on hold while I go get her?"

"Yes, sure." Clearly, they had been expecting my call and I made a mental note that the voice had even used the proper pronoun.

A week before, I had given a "Transgender 101" training in Idaho at a conference for justice system professionals—probation officers, correctional officials and social workers. As is my practice, I put forth my "Standing Offer" which I've written about here before. To remind, the offer is this: "I'm willing to talk to anyone in a public place or on the phone for up to an hour—and I don't watch my watch—relative to being transgender or gay, lesbian, or bisexual, or anything else that has nothing to do with gender or sexuality and simply relates to surviving the Human Condition."

I always throw in that the offer is "transferable"—"You can give the offer to someone whom you think might benefit from it."

I don't do this because of an enormous personal ego, but instead because I'm a student of the "Special Ks"—Dr. King and Robert F. Kennedy. I was eleven years old when they were murdered and before they went, they taught me (and millions of others) that we have an obligation to make the world a better place. "I'm a hopeless idealist," I say. "Talking to strangers who are struggling is one of the ways that I seek to carry out the Special Ks' charge."

Some have taken me up on my Standing Offer, including John, the Idaho probation officer who started the whole process that had me waiting on the phone now. An attendee at my Trans 101 talk in Idaho, John called a couple days after I returned to Minneapolis. He explained that he had a twenty-seven-year-old client named Blair, his first-ever transgender client; she had previously served time for burglary, and once out of prison, Blair was assigned to him. The week before my talk in Idaho, she had attempted suicide by drug overdose and to protect her from further self-harm, John put her in lockup.

"There's no other place to keep her safe from using drugs again," John said during that call. "We've got no real mental health resources out here."

His request: maybe me talking to Blair would help. "Absolutely," I said. "I am happy to do that."

My phone, on speaker now as I looked out the windshield at a brilliant blue sky, repeatedly clicked on hold. Eventually, the female voice returned. "I've got Blair here and will transfer you."

A second later, there was a new voice.

"Hello?" I heard a mixture of pitch—part masculine, part strained feminine.

"Hi, this is Ellie Krug calling from Massachusetts. John Balding said you'd be expecting my call; he thought that it might make sense for us to talk."

"Oh, wow. I can't believe you're calling me."

"Of course I'm calling," I answered. "Even though I don't know you, I care about you."

Silence.

"Thank you." The words rang heavy with emotion.

I said, "I hear you've been having a tough time of it. John gave me some of the details, but we don't need to dwell on the past. I'm happy to just talk about whatever you'd like."

Blair answered, "I've never talked to another transgender person. I've always just been alone."

My heart sank. The isolation—she was in Idaho, after all—had to be overwhelming.

"Well, you have me. I'm happy to know you and be here for you."

Again, I heard, "Thank you." Blair then continued, "I've been taking hormones off and on for three years, but I've known that I'm a woman for much longer than that. It's just that no one understands—my family doesn't accept me, and I don't feel that I matter to anyone. Yes, my mother has been trying but we got into a fight and that led me to going back to drugs. I OD'd on purpose trying to end things."

I needed to interject.

"I want you to know, you matter to me. I mean that. You deserve to be you."

More silence, followed by a shallow voice soaked with tears. "No one has ever said that to me."

"Well, it's true," I said. "Don't let anyone shake you from believing in yourself, in believing that you have the right to show up as you, Blair, a woman."

I heard a human sniffling.

I asked where they were housing her in the jail—all too often, transgender women are thrown in with men, which frequently leads to disastrous results.

"They have me in isolation," she answered.

Blair related that during her earlier prison stint she identified as female but went along with prison officials who housed her with men, which had led to her being assaulted repeatedly.

"I didn't know that I could ask to be housed with women," she said. "I just did what they said—that I had to be with the men."

Continued on page 50

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Her words underscored how many transgender humans absorb from society that they're not worthy, who believe that they don't matter, so much so that they don't know to fight for themselves. Or who believe they're not even worth the effort.

I responded, "From here on out, insist that you be housed with women or at least be kept from men, even if that means a medical floor or isolation. You're a woman and shouldn't be placed at risk with men, okay?"

"Okay, yes."

I shifted to her family and friends, hoping she'd report that there was support from someone crucial. Instead, she shared about rejection on top of rejection. Her father wasn't in her life and Blair's mother was trying to accept her but found it difficult.

"I know that she loves me," Blair said. "It's just that it's hard for her. While I understand that, she's my mother. She's supposed to be there for me regardless." Blair's voice dropped with the last few words.

This is the case way too often—parents or friends who can't accept us for our true selves. It hurts like hell and the rejection lends to greater depression and isolation.

I said, "I'm sorry about your mother. That just stinks." There really wasn't any other way to put it.

Shifting, I asked, "Can I remind you of something?"

"Yes."

"Believe it or not, you have great grit and resiliency," I said. "Grit is like sandpaper—the power to withstand the crap that life throws at you."

"Okay."

"Resiliency is the ability to bounce back, to rebound from setbacks."

Again, "Okay."

"I'm telling you," I said, trying to churn empathy into inspiration, "you've got far more grit and resiliency than you know. I'm absolutely positive of that."

"I don't feel like I have either of those," Blair answered.

"Oh, yes you do," I shot back. "You're still alive. You've navigated jails and prisons as your true self. Heck, you were willing to talk to me, a total stranger. Trust me, you've got reservoirs of grit and resiliency that you've barely tapped. Remember that as you go forward."

"I hadn't thought of it that way," she said. "Maybe you are right."

"I know that I'm right. Grit and resiliency will pull you through."

After another ten or fifteen minutes of my long-distance attempt at coaching, it was time to end the call.

"I've enjoyed talking to you, Blair," I said. "I believe in you."

Again, I heard the crinkling sound of human tears.

"Thank you for calling me, Ellie. This has meant a lot."

"It's meant a lot to me as well. Hang in there and feel free to reach out if you'd like."

"I will."

As I ended the call, I thought about how incredibly difficult it must be for the Blairs of the world—alone, wanting to matter to those in their life, fighting for some semblance of respect, and simply desiring to love and be loved.

Then I thought, But for the grace of God, there go I.

How lucky I am.

Notes: (1) Blair has granted permission to use her real name; (2) As we mourn the many transgender humans lost to violence on this Transgender Day of Remembrance, we absolutely cannot forget those lost to self-violence; (3) My Standing Offer is open to all humans, including you dear gentle reader; and (4) If you are thinking of self-harm, contact the Trevor Project (866-488-7386 24/7) or the Trans Lifeline (877-565-8860) or dial 911.

You matter to this world and you matter to me; please do not end your life! Others and I care about you! ∎

Ellen (Ellie) Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change *(2013). She speaks and trains on diversity and inclusion topics; visit www.elliekrug.com where you can also sign up for her newsletter, The Ripple. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.*

THE NETWORK

VACATION RENTALS

ADVERTISER INDEX

Apparel & Accessories
Costumes Plus 35
MartinPatrick3 39
Arts & Entertainment
Chanhassen Dinner Theatres 17
Electric Fetus 15
Hennepin Theatre Trust 19
Illusion Theater 17
Minnesota Dance Theatre ... 16
Minnesota Orchestra 13
Ordway Center for the Performing Arts 19
Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus 15
Auctions
James Peterson Co., LLC 33
Automotive
Jaguar Land Rover Minneapolis 2
Luther Bloomington acura subaru 45
Swedish Motors 46
Bars & Nightlife
Gay 90's 19
The Commodore 23
W.A. Frost 23
Beauty & Relaxation
Bishops Cuts / Color 26
Beer, Liquor & Wine Stores
Cedar Lake Wine Co. 27
Lowry Hill Liquors, Lakeside Wine & Spirits 31
Events
Lavender's First Thursdays ... 51
Lavender's Nights at the Theatre
Financial
Associated Bank 3
H&R Block 31
Roya Moltaji–Charterpoint Wealth Strategies 6
Floral & Garden
Best Wishes Floral 25
Food
Mike & Jen's Cocoa 35
Gifts
Brushy Creek Gifts 23
Outloud Promotions 7
Rainbow Road 41
Grocery Stores
Mississippi Market 21
Seward Co-op Grocery & Deli 22
Health & Wellness
Dr. Paul Amble, DDS 43
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota 52
Jeromeo In The Loop 29
Julie Childs, MSW, LICSW, LADC 7
Linden Hills Dentistry 27
Mill District Dental 46
Mint Orthodontics 29
Pride Institute 35
Q Fitness & Wellness 7
University of Minnesota, Infectious Diseases 33
Home Furnishings & Accessories
MidModMen + Friends 37
Schneiderman's Furniture 5
Home Services
Stafford Home Service 43
House Lift Remodeler 46
Standard Heating & Air Conditioning 6
Insurance
Davina Baldwin 7
Dawn Bartell 15
Pam Petersen, American Family Insurance 7
Jewelry
Arthur's Jewelers 27
Jewelry by Johan 25
Max's 29
Legal
Cloutier Law Offices 17
Jerry Burg, Attorney at Law .. 25
Media & Communications
Radio K 15
Military
Minnesota National Guard . 31
Optical
Spectacle Shoppe 35
Pet Products & Services
Pet Wants 35
Real Estate & Rentals
Amy Ruzick, Kay Johnson–NoPlaceLikeHome Team 7
Marilyn Farinella 7
Scott Belcher 7
Restaurants
Cajun Boiling 22
Cecil's Deli 25
Co-op Creamery Cafe 22
Element Wood Fire Pizza 25
French Meadow Bakery & Café 23
JD Hoyt's Supper Club 21
Pizza Luce 21
Senior Living
The Pillars of Prospect Park .. 43
Sports & Recreation
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources 9
Prestige Pools 29
Tobacco Products
Smokeless Smoking 6
Travel & Accommodations
Hawks View Cottages & Lodges 27
Mpls Reg Chamber 37
Visit Saint Paul 43

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